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**SUBJECT:** Establishing Employee Performance Measures and Targets for 2006

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**EFFECTIVE:** October 18, 2005

**EXPIRES:** September 30, 2006

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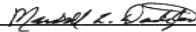
**FOR ACTION BY:** Field Offices and Headquarters Units

**SEND RESPONSE TO:** None

**DUE DATE:** October 31, 2005

**PROJECT CODE:** 365

**REFERENCE:** Policy & Standards Memorandum (PSM) 57-05 and P&P 435.2-NASS

**Approved by:**   
Deputy Administrator For Field Operations

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- I. General: Implementation of the new 5-level performance appraisal program began in April 2005. Each year annual goals are developed and aligned with NASS's long-term strategic goals. Linkage of these Agency goals to individuals' performance plans are accomplished by including the annual goals in Performance Element #2: Mission Results and Goal Accomplishment as performance standards. This alignment of the long-term strategic goals and cascading annual goals to employees' performance plans shows the extent of each employee's contribution to both the Agency's annual and long-term goals. NASS FY 2006 Goals are posted to the NASSnet website at [http://nassnet/library/info/divgoals04/docs/fy\\_2006\\_goals\\_v10\\_05.xls](http://nassnet/library/info/divgoals04/docs/fy_2006_goals_v10_05.xls).
- II. Strategic Alignment Statement: Every employee performance plan should include a statement about the position's alignment with the NASS Strategic Plan in Performance Element #2, Mission Results and Goal Accomplishment. Alignment of NASS programs with strategic goals has been updated because USDA's Strategic Plan is currently being updated. The Agricultural Statistics Program is being moved from Objective 1.1 to 1.5 in Goal 1. The program alignment table, forms 435A & B have been updated and posted to the NASSnet. It is recommended that you use only the strategic goals numbers in the alignment statement and not by each objective. This should help minimize changes to this alignment statement each year. Please refer to the wording in these documents for the 2006 rating period.
- III. Identifying and Tracking Key Activities: In preparing new performance plans each year, carefully select "key" activities that are good indicators of performance. Activities can be tracked and evaluated by using timeliness, quality, quantity, and/or efficiency information. These selected measures should be important to Agency managers and supervisors in monitoring the progress of activities, allocating resources appropriately, being held accountable for accomplishing the highest and most urgent program priorities, and communicating results to employees, its customers and data users.

Setting performance targets for units and/or individuals should represent reasonable and fair expectations of activities to be accomplished during the rating cycle. These anticipated outcomes (or targets) are then compared to the actual results. Every employee directly contributes, in some fashion, to the overall performance of the office (or unit). Therefore, the overall performance level of the office (or unit) should reflect the successes attained by the performance of employees in the office (or unit).

IV. Documenting Performance Measures and Targets: The following standard format should be used in establishing performance measures and targets in Performance Element #2: Mission Results & Goal Accomplishment in employee performance plans. The goal, its measures, and targets are considered to be a performance standard.

- **Goal #:** Indicate the goal number (#) and goal selected from the NASS FY 2006 Goals document.
  - **Measure:** Identify a measurable activity that supports the accomplishment of the goal and is the responsibility of the employee. A “measurable activity” associated with the each goal should be selected from the NASS FY 2006 Goals document. Multiple measures or activities can be used for any goal.
    - **Target:** Define a specific expectation of each measure in terms of timeliness, quantity, quality, or level of efficiency for completing the activity. The target should be attainable, reasonable, measurable, and objective. Multiple targets can be used, as needed, for a given measurable activity.

Supervisors may use any goal in this document regardless of its indicated ownership. Any project manager or team leader may prescribe the use of a goal, measure, and target for all members of the team or project assignment.

V. Rating Performance Elements: As stated in PSM 57-05, Section IV, a performance standard is a measure to tell the employee how well they have to perform/accomplish their work to meet a desired level of performance. NASS performance standards are defined at the Fully Successful level. Performance Element #2 should be evaluated by the supervisor in the same manner as the other elements (1, 3, 4 and 5) in employees performance plans. Supervisors should refer to the guidelines in Section VIII in the PSM for rating an employee “Exceeds Fully Successful”, “Meets Fully Successful”, or “Does Not Meet Fully Successful.” The additional factors outlined in Section IV should also be used as a guide in rating each element.

In situations, or if circumstances exists, where an employee who was not able to or could not contribute or participate in the outcome (or results) of an activity, through no fault of their own, the performance measure(s) and result(s) can be considered “not ratable” when deriving a rating of record. Any results associated with an unratable measure should be fully documented by the supervisor.

VI. Measuring Headquarters (HQ) Activities and Setting Targets: HQ personnel will use the NASS FY 2006 Goals document as the basis for identifying performance standards (goals) and activities to be measured. HQ goals are most often referred to as Goals 1-299.

HQ managers and supervisors should use the above standard format in finalizing the performance standards for Performance Element #2. It is encouraged that the supervisor and employee work closely together in developing the wording and clear understanding of the desired expectations for each target. Key targets for timeliness, quantity, quality, or level of efficiency should be developed

for each measure (or activity). It is highly recommended some baseline data be determined so a fair and reasonable target can be used. Work continues in expanding meaningful HQ targets for timeliness, quantity, quality, or level of efficiency. Several examples of Headquarters goals, performance measures and targets are formatted and illustrated in Attachment I.

- VII. Measuring Field Operations (FO) Activities and Setting Targets: Field office personnel will also use the NASS FY 2006 Goals document as the basis for identifying and measuring Performance Standards (goals) and activities. The number of field office goals are limited in number and more generic than HQ goals, but are most often referred to as any goal over 300. Of course, other goals in addition to the 300 series goals, can be used as needed.

Field office managers and supervisors should also use the standard format in finalizing performance element #2. Unlike the wide variety of Headquarters activities and targets, all field offices will be using more standardized performance targets for most employees in 2006. The standardized performance targets for FO staff are illustrated in Attachment II.

Survey performance for each field office will be compared to the performance levels of other field offices. Comparison of survey performance will be used for ranking field offices nationally by Headquarters FO management to set rating levels for each office (targets exceeding expectations, targets meeting expectations, and targets not meeting expectations). Survey performance information for survey quality, timeliness, and efficiency is prepared by the Survey Administration Branch and posted to the NASSnet on a quarterly basis. Additionally, field offices will receive a spreadsheet for State-level data, survey-by-survey.

- VIII. Responsibility for Review and Approval of Measures and Targets: First-line supervisors are responsible for working with employees in selecting appropriate goals, developing fair and attainable performance measures and targets. Second-line supervisors serve as reviewing officials are required to approve each plan. Senior Executives are not required to approve performance plans, except for those individuals they directly supervise, but should be kept fully informed of the goals being used, the activities being measured, and the targets established.

Employee performance plans should be implemented within 30 days after the beginning of the rating period, starting October 1 each year. Performance plans can be updated at anytime during the rating period through the following June. If the plans are updated, they must be initialed and dated by the rating and reviewing officials, and employees upon receipt of any new changes in the plan.

- IX. Due Date: All goals, performance measures and targets should be incorporated into employees' performance plans by October 31, 2005. Any changes made to performance plans must be made 90 days prior to the end of the rating year, September 30, 2006. More detailed instructions will be coming out later in the year for handling changes in performance plans made during the last 90 days of the rating period. Official employee performance plans are to be maintained by each HQ unit and Field Office and should be made readily available upon request at any time.

Additional page attachments to employee performance plans, using goal-measure-target format, are acceptable in order to simplify and reduce the administrative time of updating the Performance Element #2 page and reformatting the performance plan document.

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**Headquarters (HQ) Supervisory & Non-supervisory Statisticians**

The following standardized HQ performance measures and targets illustrate measures and targets that should be used in performance plans for Statistics Division Branch Chiefs, Section Heads, Statisticians, and Computer Specialists who are directly responsible for processing data, summaries, and estimates submission files for designated National probability and non-probability surveys. These measures and targets can also be used by support staff, if they are directly responsible. Branch Chiefs and Section Heads should include most of the measures and targets below. For non-supervisory statisticians and computer specialists, one or more of the measures and targets below may be used depending on work assignments for processing, report, and/or commodity responsibilities (and are not limited to this set of standardized measures and targets).

**Goal 29: Complete all data products on time, accurately, and error-free.**

- **Measure:** Data are reviewed accurately and in a timely fashion.
  - **Target:** For assigned responsibilities, data are reviewed with few unexplained data problems present in the summary.
  - **Target:** The summary is run on time with few reruns due to data problems.
- **Measure:** Timely HQ processing of State and National commodity estimates.
  - **Target:** The summary is reviewed accurately and data is ready for estimate setting.
  - **Target:** The Estimation tool is operational and available for States and HQ.
  - **Target:** State recommendations are reviewed and National estimates are set to meet internal due dates.
- **Measure:** National ASB reports are released on time as scheduled.
  - **Target:** For assigned responsibilities, 95 percent of assigned National ASB reports are released on time.
- **Measure:** National ASB reports are released accurately and error-free to the public.
  - **Target:** For assigned responsibilities, the number of corrections made to ASB National reports declined from the same period a year ago.
- **Measure:** Data released to public is posted error-free on QuickStats.
  - **Target:** For assigned commodities, data should be posted to QuickStats, when available, with very few data problems.
  - **Target:** If data are not currently available on QuickStats, progress to make them available on QuickStats, should be evident over the past year.

### Field Operations Supervisory & Non-supervisory Statisticians

The following standardized performance measures and targets illustrate what activities should be used in performance plans for State Directors, Deputy Directors and Statisticians who are directly responsible for processing data, summary, and estimate submission files for designated National probability and non-probability surveys. These measures and targets can also be used by support staff, if they are directly involved in program activities. The performance plans for Deputy Directors should include most of the measures and targets below. For non-supervisory statisticians, one or more of the measures and targets below may be used depending on survey responsibility and work assignments (and are not limited to this set of standardized measures and targets).

The survey information will be posted on the NASSnet to monitor survey performance evaluating and comparing performance levels of the field offices. At this time, no “hard” targets have been set to evaluate levels of performance. Any performance information for non-probability surveys must be defined, maintained and tracked by the field office. Additional detailed information on the specific use of FO performance measures and targets, will be distributed in a separate document by HQ Field Operations management and discussed during the next FO management teleconference.

#### Goal 300: Maintain a high-quality list of all farm operations, producers, and growers in the State.

- **Measure:** Obtain new sources of farm operations, producers, and growers in the State. (Primarily for field office supervisors.)
  - **Target:** The State Director and/or Deputy Director requests farm lists from at least several new potential list sources during FY06 identified in the SSO List Building Plan submitted in response to OM T-3-05.
  - **Target:** The SSO obtains at least one list of potential farms from the new potential list sources contacted during FY06.
  - **Target:** The number of census eligible minority farms documented on the ELMO web-site at: [http://nassnet/elmo/download/other\\_reports/minority\\_list\\_building\\_tables.pdf](http://nassnet/elmo/download/other_reports/minority_list_building_tables.pdf) increases. Reasons for decreases are documented.

#### Goal 301: Effectively and efficiently administer and support the survey program and processes in the office.

- **Measure:** Prepare and follow office survey and processing instructions and procedures.
  - **Target:** Effectively manage the State’s survey processes using SMS or other tools for producing timely status of reports to office management and other office staff involved in the survey.
- **Measure:** Evaluate survey performance. (Primarily for Supervisors and Survey Administrators)
  - **Target:** For designated National probability surveys, the State’s survey response rates reflect an effective use of available staffing and allocated budget resources.
  - **Target:** Optimize the State’s data collection methods making efficient use of available resources to maintain the annual average cost per sample at or below the rate of inflation.
  - **Target:** Optimize the State’s data collection methods making efficient use of available resources to stay as close as possible to the data collection budget request as defined in work plans for designated National surveys.

### **Goal 302: Prepare high quality estimates and statistics**

- **Measure:** Process data in a timely fashion as to meet processing schedules and due dates.
  - **Target:** For designated National probability surveys, the State's first SPS edits are processed on time to meet scheduled due dates.
  - **Target:** For designated National probability surveys, the State's final clean edited data files are processed on time to meet scheduled due dates.
- **Measure:** Data analysis is performed to identify data outliers that are validated and/or corrected prior to summarization.
  - **Target:** For designated National probability surveys, the State's final clean summaries are processed on time to meet scheduled due dates.
- **Measure:** Estimates and comments are submitted to Headquarters in a timely fashion as to meet submission due dates and deadlines.
  - **Target:** For designated National probability surveys, the State's commodity estimates and comments are submitted on time to meet scheduled submission due dates.
  - **Target:** For designated State non-probability surveys, the State's commodity estimates and comments are submitted on time to meet scheduled submission due dates.